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# For and about WOMEN

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Says U. S. I. A. Guide:

## Soviet Criticism of U. S. Develops Softer Touch

By Marie Smith

ATTRACTIVE blonde Tatiana Akhonin, back home in Washington after 15 months in the Soviet Union, is convinced that the Russians are softening in their attitudes toward the United States and the West.

Miss Akhonin was in the Soviet Union as a Russian-speaking guide in the U.S.I.A. exhibits of plastics, transportation and medicine, and she had a chance to talk with rank-and-file Soviet citizens who came to inspect the American products.

"I felt they were not as vicious in attacking us in 1961 as they were in 1959," she said.

The tall, trim graduate of George Washington University was in the Soviet Union for nine weeks in 1959 as a guide with the United States Industrial Exhibit, and returned again in 1961 for her 15-month stay.

TELLING ABOUT her impressions, she said she noted many changes in the Russian people on her second visit.

"Now they know that we have Social Security and integrated schools, and they will accept the fact that American people do have consumer goods. When we showed them consumer goods in 1959, they would argue that it was not true that American families had them," she explained.

There were other changes, too. This time she noticed that more Soviet women were wearing lipstick, that many of the younger ones had shortened their skirts, and more make an effort to dress their hair attractively.

Tatiana said she felt this was the result of their exposure to Americans, British and French and the western exhibits that have been held in the larger Russian cities during the last three years.

SHE FOUND the Soviet citizens' thirst for information about America and the outside world as keen as ever but in almost every crowd there was someone

who wanted to dispute or argue about the answers she gave to their questions.

"Except that this time, someone in the audience would come to your defense and say, 'Don't ask the girl about politics,'" she related.

"They always asked economic questions: How much our houses and cars cost, how could we afford to go to college."

They also asked about the United States intervention in Cuba. "They've made Castro into some kind of god who represents the young revolutionary hero of the year, and he's revered by the Russians," Tatiana said.

One topic that amazed the Russians was that Americans were free to travel out-

Soviet Union because she had to apply for a visa to go from one city to another.

She found the Soviet women highly interested in beauty and reducing aids and she was often asked, "How do you stay so slim?"

Tatiana admitted staying slim was difficult in the Soviet Union. During her 15 months there she lived in hotels as the exhibit moved from Moscow to Leningrad and Kiev and ate in Soviet restaurants. They all served the same fattening, starchy foods, she said.

She recalled standing in line for two hours with a crowd of Soviet housewives in a fruit market to buy pineapples at \$2 each. "There were very little fresh fruits and vegetables," she said.

MISS AKHONIN'S station was with the equipment in the medical exhibit and she explained a heart-lung machine to professional men and women. She gave away literature on the equipment but found some of them were afraid to take it.

However, she feels the value of such exchange exhibits cannot be overrated. "We hope eventually to make some penetration behind the Iron Curtain and let them know a little more about our life and, in knowing us better, fear us less. "This way we can do it," she said.

She added that the Russians are "extremely afraid we'll start a war with them, but are even more afraid that the West Germans will start one and their propaganda is that Russia must build up a space program and armaments to be prepared for it."

She said the thing she missed most during her 15 months in Russia was the "ability to get away from the Soviet Union." Here, she said, "if you've had a tense day on the job, you can go to the movies or watch television and relax. But there you can't get away from the constant bombardment of Soviet propaganda."



TATIANA AKHONIN  
... Soviets softer

side the Soviet Union. When she would tell them she was going to France, Italy or Greece on the way home, they would sigh. "They are very eager to travel outside the Iron Curtain, but very few of them do," she said.

MISS AKHONIN, who learned to speak Russian from her mother, who was born in St. Petersburg but came to the United States at the age of 16, said she did not travel as much as she would have liked inside the

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